

6/12/2006 This Week in Congress

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June 12, 2006

Dear Friend,

Welcome to "This Week in Congress." I hope you find this newsletter useful.

Announcing National 25x'25 Policy to Secure America's Energy Needs

This week, I joined congressional and industry leaders to unveil a national policy to secure America's energy future. This policy, to derive 25 percent of the nation's total energy from renewable sources such as wind, solar, biomass and biogas by 2025, will be introduced as a resolution in both the House and Senate. I joined congressional leaders Chuck Grassley (R-IA), Senate Finance Committee Chairman, and Bob Goodlatte (R-VA), House Agriculture Committee Chairman, among others in promoting this policy. Kansas is one of seven states also supporting this effort.

A comprehensive energy vision is important for the U.S. In addition to providing an important path forward for every American concerned about high energy prices, the 25x'25 vision will enhance national security, create new job opportunities in rural America, and improve the environment. With the passage of this resolution, it will become the official policy of the United States to make certain that 25 percent of its energy needs come from renewable sources.

Continuing Efforts to Respond to Veterans' Data Loss

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) disclosed this week that among the veterans' data stolen from the home of a federal employee last month was the personal information of nearly all members of our active-duty and reserve armed forces. As a member of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, I am deeply concerned with this security breach and I remain committed to protecting America's veterans, service members and their families.

On Thursday, I participated in a roundtable discussion with information technology experts from the private sector to identify best practices for managing sensitive information. The Committee will hold five hearings this month to understand what went wrong, what needs to happen to fix the problems, and what can be done to assist affected veterans. Prompt action is needed to respond to the data theft. These hearings will help the Committee understand the situation and identify the solutions for improving the VA's information security.

All veterans are advised to carefully monitor their financial statements in the coming months and report suspicious activity to the financial institution involved. The VA has set up a special website and toll-free telephone number for more information about the situation.

- Website: www.firstgov.gov
- Toll-free number: 1-800-FED-INFO (333-4636)

Learning about Agriculture in the Northwest: Farm Bill Hearing in Washington

On Saturday, I was in Yakima, Washington, for the House Agriculture Committee's seventh farm bill field hearing to hear from Washington and Oregon producers about agriculture policy. At the hearing, I learned about a variety of farm policy issues important to this area including specialty crops, conservation programs, labor and marketing issues. About 75 local producers, agribusiness leaders and agriculture officials attended the hearing.

Agriculture in the Pacific Northwest is very different from that of other areas like Kansas. Washington farmers grow more than 230 food, feed, and seed crops and are second only to California in the variety of crops grown. The agriculture producers conveyed the need for access to new markets and more funding for research. The theme of the hearing was the desire of specialty crop producers, like those in the Pacific Northwest who grow apples, pears, sweet cherries, carrots and red raspberries, to share in the benefits of the next farm bill. The current farm bill is primarily targeted to program crops like corn and wheat.

Also while there, I had the chance to visit with former Kansas State agricultural economics professor and department head, Dr. Daniel Bernardo. Dr. Bernardo is now the dean of the College of Agricultural, Human, and Natural Resource Sciences at Washington State University.

Please share your thoughts on the 2007 Farm Bill by visiting: <http://www.house.gov/moranks01/IMA/issue.htm>. Your comments will be useful to me and the Agriculture Committee as we prepare to draft this important legislation.

House Passes Telecommunications Legislation Focusing on Rural America

The House passed the Communication, Opportunity, Promotion, and Enhancement Act of 2006 this week. This legislation is designed to help foster competition within the cable industry and to encourage the deployment of broadband Internet throughout America, with a specific focus on rural America. Creating competition within the cable industry will help lower the cost of television throughout the country.

Receiving an Update on Kansas Highways

I attended a Transportation and Infrastructure hearing on Wednesday dealing with the implementation of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU). Passed by Congress last August, this law reauthorizes funding for federal highways, public transportation and safety initiatives through 2009. Kansas ranks fourth in the nation in total highway miles and this law is expected to provide more than \$2 billion in transportation infrastructure to the state of Kansas and will create thousands of new jobs.

Testifying during the hearing were representatives of the Federal Highway Administration, Federal Transit Association, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, and the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration. They testified about each department's current status in implementing the directives Congress made last year and issues that have since arisen. I took this opportunity to question the Acting Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administrator about changes to the

Hours of Service rule for truckers transporting agriculture products. These rules govern how long a trucker may drive before having to rest.

Visiting the Geary County Campus of Cloud Community College

On my way back to Washington, D.C. on Monday, I stopped in Junction City to meet with Cloud County Community College (CCCC) President Richard Underbakke at CCCC's Geary County campus. President Underbakke informed me about the College's proposed expansion to add another building to provide laboratory space for the college's nursing program, as well as additional classroom space. The college currently has about 500 students. President Underbakke also visited with me about a possible wind energy project he would like to implement at the Concordia campus. It would generate electrical energy to operate the campus, provide additional revenue from any additional energy being sold, and serve as a student lab project.

Weekend Parades in Ellis and Plainville

This weekend, Robba participated in the annual Ellis Main Street Riverfest parade on Saturday morning and the Paradise Creek Festival parade on Saturday afternoon in Plainville. The communities warmly welcomed my wife and she enjoyed the opportunity to join in the events.

In the Office

Jeff Borchardt and Daniel Gibson of Kansas City were in my office this week representing the Kansas City Board of Trade to talk about the upcoming farm bill. Brad Grant of Topeka stopped by to discuss concerns compounding pharmacies have about Food and Drug Administration regulations. Kansas Agri-Women members Chris Wilson and her daughter, Joann, of Wamego, Carolyn Kleiber of Hillsboro and Jean Pettibon of Kanorado were in to explain the group's legislative priorities for the year and to talk about the 2007 Farm Bill.

Bryan Neal and Bruce Bertelsen of Olathe were in with the National Air Traffic Controllers Association to discuss their current status in contract negotiations with the Federal Aviation Administration. Kansas State Representative Melvin Neufeld of Ingalls, Marcia Nielsen of Kansas City and Andrew Allison of Topeka were in representing the Kansas Health Policy Authority (KHPA) to share the goals and plans of their organization. KHPA was established by the State of Kansas to generate ideas for public health policy in our state.

Members of the Manhattan Chamber of Commerce were in to discuss transportation, health care, and education issues. In with the group were John Armbrust, Kiel Brunner, Lyle Butler, Dick Carter, Mike Daniels, Kent and Joyce Glasscock, Dick Hayter, Sue Peterson, Linda Weis and Fred Willich. Members of the Kansas Livestock Association were in to advocate for the permanent repeal of the death tax, restoration of beef trade with Japan, and other issues important to the cattle industry. In with the group were Heather Donley of Ellsworth, Kevin Unger of Oberlin, Clayton Huseman of Topeka and Matt Perrier of Eureka.

Pastor Dario Vasquez of Salina was in to visit with me about his efforts to meet the spiritual needs of Spanish-speakers in Salina. Pastor Vasquez was in Washington for the National Hispanic Prayer Breakfast and Conference. Chris Brown of Junction City, Del Chisolm of Leavenworth, Lori Church and David Hanson of Topeka, Tony Kimmi of Manhattan and Rick Wilborn of McPherson were in with the National Association of Mutual Insurance Companies to discuss flood insurance, asbestos legislation and terrorism insurance.

Sandy Barnett of Topeka, Charlotte Linsner of Hays, Lorrie Gfeller of Manhattan and Susan Moran of Emporia were in representing the Kansas Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence to advocate for full funding of the Violence Against Women's Act and the Victims of Crime Act. They also highlighted the importance of rural outreach efforts and the continued need for awareness. Coleen Jennison and John Federico of Topeka were in representing the Kansas Cable Telecommunications Association to talk about issues related to the Telecommunications Act.

Rose Mary Mohr and Sherri Luthe of Wichita, Gail Whitley of Concordia, Sheli Sweeney of Topeka, Randall Whitley of Concordia and Patsy Terrell of Hutchinson were in the office representing the National Mental Health Association. They explained the importance of training and empowering parents to help children deal with mental health issues and the need for community support services. David Criswell of Wilson and Lisa Taylor of Garden City stopped by the office to discuss how proposed USDA regulations would adversely affect Women, Infants and Children (WIC) stores in Kansas.

Several people were in my office for a tour of the United States Capitol this week, including James and Gaelynn Bordonaro of Emporia, Lori and Ashley Dohrmann of South Hutchinson, Mary Jo and Sedera Wilkison of Lakin, and Debra Dowell of Dighton. In from Liberal were Leslie Medina and Scott and Laura Kane with their daughter, Christian. Also in were John and Stephanie Lee of Kismet, Terry and Ravenna Foster of Plains, and Darcey and Emalyn Buller of Newton with their children, Corey and Nicolas. Mardy Moree of Johnson also brought a group of students from Stanton County Middle School by to meet with me and take a tour of the U.S. Capitol.

Very truly yours,

Jerry